

and *minor*. Mr. Ray, in his *Synopsis anim.* p. 154, chapter of monkeys, thinks, this is that species described by Clusius from Leriis, which they call *Sagouin*. I am,

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Your truly humble servant,

James Parsons.

XXI. *Extract of a Letter from Naples, concerning Herculaneum, containing an Account and Description of the Place, and what has been found in it.*

Read April 18.
1751. **T**HE entrance into Herculaneum is described to be down a narrow passage, cut with a gradual descent; and, towards the bottom, into steps: and the city is supposed to lie about 60 feet under the surface of the ground. Those, who go down into it, carry each of them a wax taper, and are preceded by a guide. It is supposed, that, besides the earthquake, which swallow'd up this town, it was also at the same time overwhelmed with the burning lava, which then ran down from mount Vesuvius, during the eruption. And accordingly all the passages into it are cut thro' this lava; which is a very hard substance, like stone, of a slate-colour, and said to be composed of various kinds of metals and glass; which indeed is manifest in the appearance of it. The streets of Naples are paved with the same lava: but it seems to be of a
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much more soft and sandy substance in Herculaneum, than in the places, where they dig it for use.

The appearance of this city would greatly disappoint such, as should have raised their expectation to see in it spacious streets and fronts of houses ; for they would find nothing but long narrow passages, just high enough to walk upright in, with a basket upon the head ; and wide enough for the workmen, who carry them, to pass each other, with the dirt they dig out. There is a vast number of these passages, cut one out of another ; so that one might perhaps walk the space of two miles, by going up every turning.

Their method of digging is this. Whenever they find a wall, they clear a passage along the side of it. When they come to an angle, they turn with it ; and when they come to a door or a window, they make their way into it. But when they have so done, they are far from finding themselves in a spacious room, or open area ; for all the rooms and places they have yet found, are filled so brimfull with lava, that it sticks on to the sides of the walls ; and they can advance no farther, than as they can make their way by digging : which is such infinite labour, that when they cease to find any thing worth their search, they fill up the place again, and begin to dig elsewhere. By which means no place is quite cleared, to the great grief of every one, who has the least share of curiosity. But the king does not chuse to proceed in any other method. Consequently, it does not appear how many stories high the houses may be ; nor is any thing to be seen over the head but lava. In which lava are vast numbers of burnt beams, that
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seem to have been beams or joists of floors ; tho' they are now little more than black dust ; and where they are quite moulder'd away, one may plainly see the grain of the wood imprinted in the lava ; so close did it stick.

In one passage, they passed by a great many pillars, lying about three feet distant from each other ; supposed to have composed a portico, or colonnade. They are of brick, plaister'd, and are fluted, and painted red. They are broken off, a little above the base, and are thrown down, in such a manner, that they now lie in an horizontal position, in the midst of the lava.

In another place, they passed through a sepulchre, a little kind of room, about 12 feet square ; which was built up, all round, in the same manner as stoves are in our modern kitchens, with niches, like the arched holes under such stoves, for the ashes to fall into. In each of those niches was a common earthen urn or pot, with a cover, full of dry bones, appearing as if they were worm-eaten.

In another part, they manifestly went in at the door of an house ; and saw a window a little on one side of it. They seemed to be in a good large room ; but the lava was left all standing in the middle of it, and only a passage made round it, in order to get the paintings off from the walls. There have been several rooms opened, from whence they have taken away paintings and mosaic floors, but which are now filled up again. Some bits of mosaic floors still remain, and are visible.

They passed another place, which is called a bath, and has that appearance. It is of a circular form,
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and seems to have been made to contain water. Here were found some marble and some statues. And a little way distant from this is a stone stair-case; but what it leads to, is not yet known.

Then they passed by a well, built round with a parapet-wall on the top, and an arch turned over it; whereby the lava has been prevented from choaking it up; and it is now a good well.

In another place, they walked, for about 30 feet, in a strait line, along the side of a stone building, supposed to be a temple. It has two very deep steps all along the bottom; and then an upright flat surface, about 4 or 5 feet high; and then a narrow cornice; and seems to be the basis or pedestal for a colonnade of pillars. In one part of it they have begun to dig, above the cornice, and find no interruption; which adds to the probability of its being the space between the pillars. However, none are yet discovered; and it will be some time, before they can be able to determine what it is.

In another place is just such another building of the like sort, but of a circular form. This they have but just begun to find.

In some places the company saw little bits of paintings on the walls; but they are taken away presently after they are found.

It is supposed, that the workmen are at present got no farther than the suburbs of the town, in this part of their search; having met with no grand buildings, unless the two last-mention'd should prove to be such.

But the theatre (which is mention'd by the writer of the letter as most worth seeing) is about
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half a quarter of a mile from the place, where the company first went down. The company therefore now re-ascended, and walked thither.

A very good view may be had of this theatre, even without descending under-ground ; for, over the seats, a very large well is dug through the ground, and through the lava ; the diameter of which well may be perhaps 15 or 20 feet ; and the depth of it about 60 feet ; and the sides of it are all smoothed and white-washed : so that it lets in a very strong light ; and a person may look down from the top, and have a very good view of the seats : but no one can see the whole of it, without going down under-ground, which this party therefore did.

They perceived, that a passage had been cleared all round the outside wall of it ; which appears to have been plaistered, and painted with pillars, and other kinds of ornaments ; most of which are taken away. They walked all round the corridor on the inside, which led to the seats. It is here totally cleared of the lava ; and they could see the arched roof, which is plaister'd. This corridor was lined and paved with marble ; but it is now all taken away. There are 25 rows of seats, all of stone. There is a pretty wide space of them, cleared quite down to the bottom ; so that a very perfect view may be had of them. The door-ways are also all cleared ; and likewise the little stair-cases, 8 or 10 in number, which led to these seats. But part of the *arena* remains not yet cleared. This whole building seems to be perfectly intire ; and nothing appears to be thrown out of its place. It is imagined, that it served both for a theatre and an amphitheatre. There does not
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appear to have been any covering over the seats. It was in the niches of the corridor of it, that almost all the fine statues were found.

The writer of the letter observes, that “ the notion “ of this theatre’s being full, when the eruption happened, and that the people had not time to “ escape,” was probably groundless; because no dead bodies have been found in it. To which is added another reason for judging, that the destruction of the city was not absolutely sudden; which is, the small quantity of riches hitherto found in it; as well as the very small number of bodies and bones, not amounting, in all, to above 20 skeletons, if so many. And one very extraordinary instance is alleged in support of this opinion, “ that they had at least *some* “ notice;” however short it might be. A skeleton was found in a door-way, in a running attitude; with one arm extended, which appeared to have had a bag of money in the hand of it: for the lava had taken so exact an impression of the man, that there was a hole under the hand of the extended arm; which hole was apparently the impression of the bag, and several pieces of silver coin were found in it. This man therefore must have had notice enough of the danger, to endeavour to secure his treasure; tho’ he must have been, as is remark’d, instantaneously encompassed with liquid fire, in attempting it.

No manuscripts have yet been found; but they have met with some few inscriptions on marble, tho’ none, that are of any consequence, or serve to give new light in any point of antiquity.

The labour of clearing the place is performed by slaves, who work chained together, two and two.

The curiosities taken out of it are deposited at a palace of the king's, at Portici; and fill several rooms there.

The finest of them are the statues. There is an exceedingly beautiful one, in white marble, of Balbus, on horseback; which stands in a portico of the palace, and is a most justly admired performance. It is quite intire; and the horse is reckoned the finest piece of work of that kind. The other statues are not yet put up. There are many of them; some in marble, some in bronze, and almost all of them fine. Particularly, one of Agrippina; also a figure of a woman, with a dejected countenance, which is the most expressive of sorrow, innocence, modesty, and diffidence, that it is possible to conceive. Some of the bronze statues are remarkable for having a sort of enamelled eyes put into them; but the whites of them look very shocking.

The marble, that has been found, is very fine, and of various sorts; and the king has made most beautiful tables of it.

The writer proceeds next to give some account of the paintings, and observes, that, to speak the truth, much the greatest part of them are but a very few degrees better than what you will see upon an ale-house-wall. They are all painted on plaister; which has been very carefully separated from the wall, in as large pieces as might be done. These pieces are now framed; and there are above 1500 of them, but not above 20, that are tolerable. The best of them are 3 large pieces; one of which is a sort of history-

history-piece, containing 4 figures, that have some expression in their faces; but even these best, if they were modern performances, would hardly be thought worthy of a place in a garret. There are about a dozen little pieces, of women dancing, centaurs, &c. the attitudes of which are very genteel, and the drawing pretty; but the shading is terrible daubing.

The colouring, that has been so much talk'd of, is allow'd to be surprisngly fresh, and well preserv'd, considering how long it has been done; but the painters of them seem to have been masters of only a very few simple colours, and those not very good ones. The red is the brightest and best. The lava was found sticking on to all the painting; which, as some think, has helped to preserve it. The paint is liable to be rubbed off; to prevent which inconvenience, they have slightly varnished it.

The designs of the greatest part of these paintings are so strange and uncouth, that it is difficult, and almost impossible, to guess what was aimed at. A vast deal of it looks like such Chinese borders and ornaments, as we see painted upon skreens. There are great numbers of little figures, dancing upon ropes; some few small bad landscapes; and some very odd pieces, either emblematical, or perhaps only the painter's whim. Of which last the writer gives two specimens; one, of a grasshopper driving a parrot; the other, of a vast great head, in the midst of what seems to have been intended for a green field encompassed with an hedge.

All the paintings are either upon black or red grounds: and such, that the writer cannot help suspecting, that it is their antiquity alone, that has recommended

mended them to their admirers, and atoned, in their eyes, for all their blemishes and defects; and professes great amazement at the accounts, which have been sent to England concerning them.

Then follows a little sort of inventory of things found in this subterraneous town; kitchen-furniture, in abundance, in iron and in copper; apparently answering the same purposes, for which we now use them, tho' a little different in shape; vast numbers of lamps, both earthen and copper; locks, hinges, &c. A loaf of bread, almost burnt to a coal, with the baker's name upon it. Some beans and barley. A fishing-net, burnt quite black; but yet hanging together, so that one may plainly see the meshes, and what the thing has been. Some urns and tripods, in bronze, chased in a very neat and curious manner; the chasing in silver. Some busts. A good many small figures, and medals; but the king is so choice of these last, that they are not to be seen, tho' said to be not very curious. All the coin, which they have found, has been silver. There are a few good *intaglio's* and *cameo's*. There is a pair of bracelets, which were found on the wrist of a skeleton; also a few ear-rings, and some rings.

The king has laid down, in the rooms at Portici, several of the mosaic pavements, that were found at Herculaneum. The designs of them are pretty enough, but not uncommon. They are, chiefly, black and white marble; and very small squares. They are laid in a cement, but so clumsily, that the pieces do not touch at all; and the same thing was observ'd at Herculaneum.

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The king is now employing a person to take drawings of all the statues, and principal paintings; with an intent to publish them, together with an account of Herculaneum. The statues cannot be made to appear more beautiful than they really are: but the writer imagines the world will be vastly deceived with regard to the paintings. For the man is a very nice drawer; and has also managed the colouring to advantage; so that he has made exceedingly pretty things, from originals, which are miserable daubings. The company having seen the drawings first, were extremely disappointed, when they afterwards came to view the originals. It is likewise proposed to make a plan of the town, by measuring all the walls, which they find, and taking all the angles; and thus, in some degree, to compensate for the omission of laying it all open.

XXII. *An Occultation of the Planet Venus by the Moon in the Day time, observed in Surrey-street, London, April 16, 1751, O. St. by Dr. John Bevis.*

Read April 18. 1751. **F**INDING many had gotten a notion from the almanac-makers, that it would be next to impossible to observe this occultation, I was resolved to give attention to it; well remembering, that I had several times seen Venus on the meridian with a three-foot transitory, when she was much nearer her superior conjunction with the sun, than now. The whole matter was to direct a tube